

Safety Last

By JULIAN DIMOCK



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I WAS sailing off Key West, looking for pictures, when I met Harrison. He was only a youngster—not more than fifteen—but no hardened adventurer had his courage when it came to playing around the sharks and reptiles of Florida.

The anchor of our house-boat had caught on a rock. The captain wrenched the capstan-bar, and pulled and pushed; but the anchor and the rock couldn't be budged. But the captain shouldn't have worried. He had Harrison on board. Harrison loafed up the gangway, slipped off his shirt and trousers, and, saying quietly, just the way they do in Mr. Alger's books, "I'll get it, cap'n," he slid over the side of the boat.

His first trip to the bottom of the bay failed of its object. After a long, full breath, down he went again, and this time he hauled the anchor from under the rock. At once he manned the windlass, pulled the anchor to the bow, and hoisted the jib. In another moment the boat was under way.

The sharks that infest the waters around Key West are not the little six-foot specimens of the New Jersey coast, but big, ravenous fifteen-foot creatures. But the boy had grown so used to swimming in those waters that he never hesitated to dive. When I told him that I wanted to take some pictures of a real, live, unfettered alligator, he volunteered to find one for me.

We tramped for many miles across open prairies and thick swamps; we waded through matted cypress heads; we followed worn trails of alligators, and minutely explored the shores of many ponds, before we discovered our quarry.

Twenty-one hundred times in every mile each of us ran the risk of setting a foot on a poisonous snake; twenty-one

hundred times for every mile the eyes must search the ground, the nerves must be alert, to escape such attack. Yet the boy pushed ahead as unconcerned as you would walk down Broadway.

When we found a small pond with a 'gator trail leading into it and none coming out, Harrison announced that our search was ended. As soon as I was ready with the camera he would fetch out the 'gator.

Wake Up and Look Pleasant, Please

WHEN the word was given, Harrison waded into the soup-like water, exploring each foot of the way with his bare toes. He had gone over half of the area of the pond, examining each square foot with his toes, when he touched something like a log lying deeply buried in the mud, that wriggled as he touched it. "I've got him," he called back. "Get ready!"

Carefully he slid his toes along the creature's body until he had located its head. Then gently and slowly he slid his foot under the jaws and by almost imperceptible degrees began to lift the saurian to the surface. Standing on one foot and using that as a fulcrum, he leaned back, using the outstretched leg and stiffened body as a lever. Slowly and very gently, he lifted the creature up through the muddy water until it was within a few inches of the surface. Then, with the same slow, careful movement, he reached forward until his hand closed tight over the jaws of the log-like reptile! With a mighty squirm the alligator tried to throw himself into a double bow-knot; but the grip of the boy held.

We took pictures of the beast for an hour; but at the end of that time an unharmed, astonished alligator slid again into the muddy waters of the pond.

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Photograph from A. D. Dart.

YOUNG Paul Graydon doesn't pick up pins for good luck, but because he knows it may help out in the next automobile father builds. When baby outgrows the baby carriage, when the fireless cooker has a nervous collapse, the Graydons don't put them out in the front yard and fill them with flowers; they collect them for the new touring car.

Mr. Graydon's present car, a commodious 6 h. p., is made out of sheet metal,

a few odds and ends he found around town, ordinary buggy wheels, and (Mrs. Graydon suspects) a few of those new preserve jars she missed during the crab-apple season last year.

Six people can sit in it comfortably if they're all in a good humor. When the old folk have had their breath of fresh air, the young blades take their try at the speed limit—often spinning through the streets at a good fifteen miles an hour.



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